



MIAMI BEACH

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR AND COMMISSION

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Transparency, Reliability, Accountability Committee

Sam Rabin – Appointed by Commissioner Weithorn

Lawrence A. Herrup – Appointed by Commissioner Steinberg

Steve Chaneles – Appointed by Commissioner Gross

Frank Del Vecchio – Appointed by Commissioner Wolfson

Alan Lips – Appointed by Commissioner Libbin

Robert Henry – Appointed by Commissioner Tobin

Mike Burke – Appointed by Mayor Bower

FROM: Commissioner Deede Weithorn, Chairperson

DATE: May 12, 2008

SUBJECT: Minutes of the Transparency, Reliability, Accountability Committee (TRAC) meeting of May 6, 2008

The meeting of the Transparency, Reliability, Accountability Committee (TRAC) was held on Tuesday, May 6, 2008 at 5pm.

The attendees were as follows:

Committee members: Commissioner Deede Weithorn, Sam Rabin, Lawrence A. Herrup, Steve Chaneles, Frank Del Vecchio, Alan Lips, Robert Henry, Mike Burke

Commissioners: Ed Tobin

City Staff: Jean Olin, Patricia Walker, Robert Parcher, Allison Williams, Anne Swanson, Anthony Broad, AC Weinstein

Public: Morris Sunshine, Jo Manning, Mitch Novick, Tania Valdemoro, Ben Torter

AGENDA

TRAC Meeting was called to order at 5:07pm.

- Robert Parcher, City Clerk, administered the oath to each committee member.
- Jean Olin, Special Counsel, briefed the committee on the requirements of the Sunshine Law.
- Introductions of Committee Members:
 - Commissioner Weithorn introduced herself and explained that her goal for this committee to issue a report making recommendations to the Commission to take action.
 - Bob Henry is a radiologist. He stated that he has some experience at the hospital with transparency issues as it relates to patient safety.
 - Sam Rabin is an attorney
 - Frank Del Vecchio a retired attorney and HUD Administrator
 - Steve Chaneles is an attorney and former practicing CPA with inactive certificates in other jurisdictions
 - Mike Burke was a public administrator
 - Bob Parcher is the City Clerk of the City of Miami Beach (CMB) and a staff liaison to TRAC

- Trish Walker is the Chief Financial Officer of the CMB, a CPA and a staff liaison to TRAC
 - Larry Herrup is a CPA and Chairman of the CMB Board of Adjustment
 - Alan Lips is a CPA
 - Allison Williams is the Chief Accountant in the CMB Finance Department and a CPA
- The committee members decided that TRAC would meet every other Thursday at 5pm starting May 22, 2008. The committee members as a whole decided that bimonthly meetings at first were important and when the issues at hand were less pressing meetings could be scaled back to once a month. (The meeting schedule and locations are Attachment A.)
- Frank Del Vecchio nominated Steve Chaneles to be Vice Chairman of the committee. Second by Larry Herrup. All in favor.
- Commissioner Weithorn began the discussion of the committee's purpose by reading from the April 4, 2008 Press Release (Attachment B), "The purpose of TRAC shall be to review the City's systems of internal controls and recommend to the Mayor and Commission measures to enhance transparency, reliability and accountability in the City's governance." She stated what was key to this task is to review the systems of internal or operational controls with in the city departments and come up with recommendations that make the systems transparent to the public. Trish Walker and Allison Williams worked together to produce definitions of the following terms: Transparency in Government, Reliability in Government, and Accountability in Government (Attachment C). E-Governance is another term that Commissioner Weithorn discussed which means that the government chooses to put as much information as possible on their website and make it readily and easily available to the public, so that individuals would not need to make as many public records requests as the information would already be available and easy to find on the website.
- Commissioner Weithorn requested a discussion of the priorities of the committee to begin in this meeting and continue into the next meeting. She requested that each committee member bring back two or three departments that they consider a top priority for examination and recommendations. Frank Del Vecchio distributed a package he created which examined the overtime records for the building department.
- A copy of the Management Letter dated September 30, 2006, in accordance with the rules of the Auditor General of the State of Florida, was distributed to the committee. A discussion took place which clarified that a financial audit does not cover operational procedures, but purely examines that financial policies are followed. An outside financial audit would not be able to pin point failings in the operations systems which allow for breakdowns or corruption in the department.
- Commissioner Weithorn may, as the committee's discussions continue, find that she wants to table certain issues if she feels that they need to be discussed with the Legal Department before becoming a subject of the committee.
- Commissioner Weithorn plans that once the priorities of the committee have been established we can request reports form the administration on how those departments are supposed to function and then find out how they actually work.
- Sam Rabin requested a list of all of the city departments which their budget included and any revenue that department generates.
- Steve Chaneles enquired if there was a "Resident Complaint" box and if the committee could review any items submitted as another starting point for TRAC's priorities.
- Larry Herrup listed the Building Department, Fire Department, Code Enforcement, and Sanitation as places he would like to start.

- Commissioner Tobin specifically has issues with the Building Department, CIP and Public Works in regards to cost overruns and the length of time that it takes to complete projects.
- Several committee members mentioned the Business Resolution Task Force which Commissioner Gross chaired several years ago. That committee made several recommendations in regards to making the Building Department easier to navigate, some of which was never implemented and it would be good to know what happened between the commission's approval of the recommendations and what actually changed in the department. Commissioner Weithorn pointed out that TRAC's purpose was not to make things easier, but to create systems that are with clear up front expectations that can be monitored and ensure that clear checks and balances exist so that breakdowns in the system can be easily pinpointed. That committee's final report will be made available for review by the TRAC members.
- Frank Del Vecchio requested that in examining the Building Department the Committee members review the City Manager's LTC 114 -2008 and discuss how the committee can examine the department from the inside out as well as from the outside in.
- Commissioner Weithorn has already arranged to meet with the City Manager and an outside auditing firm, but as Allison Williams explained an auditing firm will only analyze the financial procedures. This committee will be examining the operational procedures.
- Notebooks will be assembled for the next meeting, which will include all handouts, etc. for each meeting. Committee members can either bring their notebook to each meeting or leave it at City Hall.
- Commissioner Weithorn also would like the committee to consider what type of system can be set up for the residents and business owners to submit anonymous complaints to the administration and commission.
- Commissioner Weithorn again requested that the members bring their ideas for which departments to start with to the next meeting. Meeting adjourned.